

September 29, 1992

Pam Conrath, RN, MN
Director of Nursing Staff Development
Central Washington Hospital
1300 Fuller Street
Wenatchee WA 98801

Dear Ms. Conrath:

The Washington State Board of Nursing, at its September 13, 1991 meeting, considered the practice issue you submitted: "A licensed nurse taking a telephone order from a physician via a non-licensed physician employee (i.e. non-licensed office nurse or technician)."

The following is the opinion of the Board about an RN receiving an order from an authorized practitioner that has been transmitted through a third party:

1. An RN is indeed authorized to receive an order that has been transmitted by a person who has been selected by a practitioner from whom RN's may accept orders.
2. The Registered Nurse must assure that the order has generated from a person authorized in the Nurse Practice Act to prescribe or provide directions to the RN (i.e., a licensed physician, osteopathic physician, dentist, or podiatrist).
3. The Registered Nurse must evaluate the order prior to implementation.
4. The licensure/non-licensure of the person selected to transmit the order does not modify these responsibilities.
5. Health care facilities may determine a need for more stringent requirements for the transmission of orders through others, and are not precluded from doing so by the Nurse Practice Act.

Under the provisions of chapter 18.88 RCW a Registered Nurse may legally do anything not specifically excluded from the scope of RN practice in RCW 18.88.280 which has been prescribed by a licensed physician, osteopathic physician, dentist, or chiropodist (RCW 18.88.030 [5]). The Registered Nurse is, however, directly accountable and responsible to the individual consumer for the quality of nursing care rendered (RCW 18.88.010). Because of this accountability and responsibility, the Board of Nursing will issue opinions concerning the advisability of various categories of nurses performing particular acts of procedures.

Any opinion issued by the Board of Nursing is advisory and intended for the guidance of the requesting parties only. The opinion is not legally binding and does not have the force and effect of a duly promulgated regulation or declaratory ruling of the Board. If I can be of additional assistance, I can be reached at Department of Health, Washington State Board of Nursing, 1300 Quince, MS EY-27, Olympia Washington 98504, (206) 753-2686.

Sincerely,

Patricia O. Brown, RN, MSN
Executive Director
Washington State Board of Nursing